

Mental Health Training for Interpreters and Providers in Refugee Clinics

Introduction

In many professions, effective communication is essential for a successful provider-consumer interaction. In particular, in working with clients with mental health problems, clinicians rely solely on verbal and non-verbal communication as the primary tool for obtaining a thorough psychiatric assessment, providing treatment, and forming a therapeutic relationship with the client. Language barriers can lead to miscommunications, which can further lead to under- or over-diagnosis and inappropriate treatment.

Overcoming language and cultural barriers between the client and the clinician is not an easy task. Both parties interpret cues based on a set of culturally determined beliefs and values, in addition to language differences. If we assume that language and cultural match can bring more beneficial effects to treatment outcome, we need to have many more bilingual and bicultural professionals. In our current culturally diverse population, with a large number of refugees whose primary language is not English, it is next to impossible to staff an organization competent in so many languages and dialects. The need for culturally competent services far exceeds the available number of bilingual and bicultural professionals. Therefore, the use of interpreters is vital to bridge the language and cultural gap, even though it may not be the ideal communication medium.

Although many organizations already use interpreters, at least three problem areas exist:

- Most interpreters are not properly trained in the art of interpreting in working with clients with mental health problems.
- Most providers may not be skilled in using interpreters in providing mental health assessment and care to non-English-speaking clients.
- Most non-English speaking clients are ill-informed as to their right to receive service in their own native language. Even if interpreter services are available, the clients often find it difficult to express themselves and may be confused by the roles of the provider and interpreter.

This workshop is designed to train both interpreters and providers to work effectively in a refugee clinic setting in providing mental health care to the refugee population. One day of the workshop is designed for training interpreters, and the second day is for providers.

Mental Health Training for Interpreters

The **overall goal** of this training is to produce culturally competent interpreters who are able to identify language and cultural interpretation needs of non-English speaking refugee clients, and for interpreters to gain knowledge and understanding of clinical and system issues in mental health in order to more effectively serve the clients in a refugee clinic.

The **curriculum** includes six major components:

1. Interpreter's roles and responsibilities
2. Basic interpreting skills and techniques in working with clients with mental health disorders
3. Overview of mental health care in the United States – clinical issues
4. Overview of mental health care in the United States – system issues
5. Culture and its impact on mental health of refugee populations
6. Culture and its impact on cross-cultural communication.

Learning objectives: By the end of this workshop, the participant will be able to

1. Identify major roles and responsibilities in interpretation in a refugee clinic setting
2. Identify and distinguish between different formats of interpretation, and to match the most appropriate one in working with clients with mental health disorders
3. Improve skills in dealing with role conflicts
4. Increase his/her understanding of mental health clinical issues of refugees: terminology, assessment, diagnosis and treatment
5. Increase his/her understanding of the mental health system
6. Improve his/her skills in incorporating English mental health terms into his/her native language
7. Increase his/her understanding of the impact of culture on mental health and mental illness
8. Improve his/her understanding of cross-cultural communication strategies.

Mental Health Training for Interpreters (cont'd)

AGENDA

Welcome and Introduction
Workshop Objectives

Part 1: Cross-Cultural Communication

9:00-10:00am

1. Vital role of communication in health and mental health care
2. Values of culturally competent interpretation services
3. Legal and ethical consequences of poor communication
4. Major barriers to effective communication
5. Effective cross-cultural communication skills

Part 2: The Role of Interpreters in Working with Clients with Mental Health Disorders

10:00-12:00

1. Definitions
2. Roles and responsibilities of interpreters
3. Therapeutic triad model
4. Cultural competence criteria
5. Skills and techniques:
 - Stages of interpreting
 - Interpreting format
 - Dealing with role expectations and conflicts
6. Special challenges in working with mental health clients
7. Code of ethics

Lunch

12:00-1:00

Part 3: Overview of Mental Health Care System: Clinical and System Issues

1:00-4:30

1. Definitions and key mental health terms
2. Common mental health diagnoses of refugee populations
3. Assessment and evaluation
4. Mental health treatment services
5. Psychiatric medication
6. Special challenges for the interpreter in mental health clinical assessment and treatment
7. Mental health treatment settings/services/professionals
8. Legal procedures and clients' rights
9. Role of culture in mental health
10. Special stressors of refugee populations
11. Special role of refugee clinics in serving mental health clients

Wrap-up: Questions and Answers
Evaluation

Mental Health Training for Providers

The **overall goal** of this training is to improve cultural competency of providers in a refugee clinic setting, when caring for and treating refugee clients with mental health problems, and to increase their knowledge and skills in working with interpreters.

The **curriculum** includes six major components:

1. Provider's roles and responsibilities
2. Basic interpreting skills and techniques in working with clients with mental health disorders
3. Overview of mental health care in the United States – clinical issues
4. Overview of mental health care in the United States – system issues
5. Culture and its impact on mental health of refugee populations
6. Culture and its impact on cross-cultural communication.

Learning objectives: By the end of this workshop, the participant will be able to

1. Identify common problems in interpreting
2. Gain familiarity with the role of cultural interpreters
3. Familiarize oneself with the therapeutic triad model
4. Learn interpreting formats and stages, and the best format to work with mental health clients
5. Understand the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in working with non-English speaking refugee clients
6. Improve understanding of common clinical mental health diagnoses amongst refugees and the mental health care system
7. Understand the role of culture in mental health
8. Understand the special role of refugee clinics in the caring of mental health clients.

Mental Health Training for Providers (cont'd)

AGENDA

Welcome and Introduction
Workshop Objectives

Part 1: Cross-Cultural Communication

9:00-10:00

1. Vital role of communication in health and mental health care
2. Legal responsibilities to ensure linguistic access in health care settings
3. Major barriers to effective communication
4. Effective cross-cultural communication skills

Part 2: Therapeutic Use of Interpreters in Providing Mental Health Care

10:00-12:00

1. Definitions
2. Roles and responsibilities of providers
3. Therapeutic triad model
4. Skills and techniques:
 - Stages of interpreting
 - Interpreting format
 - Dealing with role conflicts with the interpreter
5. Special challenges in working with mental health clients
6. Common issues and problems in interpretation and ways to overcome barriers

Lunch

12:00-1:00

Part 3: Overview of Mental Health Care System: Clinical and System Issues

1:00-4:30

1. Definitions and key mental health terms
2. Common mental health diagnoses of refugee populations
3. Assessment and evaluation
4. Mental health treatment services
5. Psychiatric medication
6. Special challenges for the provider in mental health clinical assessment and treatment
7. Mental health treatment settings/services/professionals
8. Legal procedures and clients' rights
9. Role of culture in mental health
10. Special stressors of refugee populations
11. Special role of refugee clinics in serving mental health clients
12. Summary – 20 tips in working with non-English speaking mental health clients

Wrap-up: Questions and Answers
Evaluation